

MR. KHRUSHCHEV TO PRESIDENT KENNEDY

Unofficial translation

APRIL 22, 1961

MR. PRESIDENT: I received your reply of 18 April. You write that the United States does not intend to carry out a military intervention in Cuba. However, numerous facts known to the entire world, and certainly known better by the Government of the United States of America than anybody else—present a different story. However much the opposite is assured, it is now indisputably ascertained that the preparations for the intervention, the financing of armament, and the transfer of hired gangs which have invaded the territory of Cuba were indeed carried out by the United States.

The armed forces of the United States of America have directly participated in implementing the piratic assault on Cuba. American bombers and fighter planes supported the operation of the hirelings who have entered Cuban territory and participated in the military acts against the armed forces of the lawful government and people of Cuba.

Such are the facts. They illustrate the direct participation of the United States of America in the armed aggression against Cuba.

In your message you took the stand of justification and even eulogy of the assault on Cuba, this crime which has shocked the whole world.

The organization of military aggression against Cuba—only because the way of life chosen by its people does not

correspond to the tastes of the leading circles in the United States and the North American monopolies acting in Latin America—you seek to justify by reasoning about the devotion of the U.S. Government to the ideals of "freedom." I take the liberty to ask: What freedom do you mean?

The freedom to strangle the Cuban people with the bony hand of starvation by means of economic blockade? Is this freedom? The freedom to send military planes over the territory of Cuba, to expose to barbaric bombardment peaceful Cuban cities, to set fire to sugar cane plantations? Is this freedom?

History knows numerous examples when, under the excuse of the defense of freedom, bloody reprisals were carried out against the people, colonial wars were waged and one country after the other was taken by the throat.

Apparently, in the case given, you mean the aspiration of the U.S. Government to reestablish in Cuba this kind of "freedom" under which the country would dance to the tune of a stronger neighbor, and the foreign monopolies again could plunder the national riches of Cuba and make profit out of the blood and sweat of the Cuban people. But the Cuban people made their revolution against exactly this kind of "freedom," driving out Batista who, perhaps, faithfully served the interests of his foreign masters but who was a foreign element in the body of the Cuban nation.

Thus you, Mr. President, express solicitude about a band of enemies chased out by their nation, who have found refuge under the wing of those who try to keep Cuba under the muzzle of the arms of their cruisers and minesweepers. But why are you not moved by the destiny of the 6-million-strong Cuban nation? Why do you not wish to reckon with its inalienable right to freedom and independent life, with its right to arrange its internal affairs as it thinks fit? Where is the code of international law, or, finally, of human morality, with the aid of which such a position could be justified? In short, they do not exist.

The Cuban people have expressed their will once again with a degree of clarity which could not leave a single doubt even with those who prefer to close their eyes to reality. They have shown that they not only know their interests best, but know also how to defend them. Cuba today is, of course, not the Cuba which you identify with the band of traitors who fought against their own nation. This is the Cuba of workers, peasants, and intelligentsia. This is a nation which has rallied close around its revolutionary government headed by the national hero, Fidel Castro. And this nation, judging all things, has met the interventionists in a worthy manner. Surely this is true evidence of the real will of the people of Cuba. I think this is convincing. And if it is so, then surely the time is ripe to draw sober conclusions from it.

As for the Soviet Union, I have said many times. I affirm again: Our Government does not seek any advantages or privileges in Cuba. We have no bases in Cuba and do not intend to establish any. This is well known to you, and to your generals and admirals. If, despite this, they still insist on scaring people with inventions

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about "Soviet bases" in Cuba, they do it for the benefit of simpletons. However, the number of such simpletons is ever diminishing, including, I hope, in the United States.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. President, to express my opinion as to your declarations, and the declarations of some other U.S. statesmen, that rockets and other armaments might be placed on Cuban territory and used against the United States.

From this a conclusion is drawn as if the United States had a right to attack Cuba—either directly or through the enemies of the Cuban people whom you arm with your weapons, train on your territory, maintain with the money of U.S. taxpayers, transport by the transport units of your armed forces, at the same time striving to mask the fact that they are fighting the Cuban people and its legal government.

You also refer to some duty of the United States "to defend the Western Hemisphere against external aggression." But what kind of duty can it be in this case? No one has a duty to defend rebels against the legal government in a sovereign state, which Cuba is.

Mr. President, you are taking a very dangerous path. Think about it. You speak about your rights and obligations. Certainly, everyone can have pretensions to these rights or those rights, but then you must also permit other states to base their acts in analogous instances on the same kind of reasons and considerations.

You declare that Cuba is allegedly able to use its territory for acts against the United States. This is your assumption, and it is not based on any facts. We, however, on our side, are able now to refer to concrete facts and not to assumptions: In some countries bordering directly on the Soviet Union by land and by sea there are now governments which conduct a far from wise policy, governments which have concluded military agreements with the United States and have put their territory at its disposal to accommodate American military bases there.

In addition, your military people openly declare that these bases are directed toward the Soviet Union. Even so, this is clear to all: If you consider yourself to be in the right to implement such measures against Cuba which have lately been taken by the United States of America, you must admit that other countries, also, do not have lesser reason to act in a similar manner in relation to states on whose territories preparations are actually being made which represent a threat against the security of the Soviet Union. If you do not wish to sin against elementary logic, you evidently must admit such a right to other states. We, on our side, do not adhere to such views.

We consider that the reasonings voiced on this subject in the United States are not only a highly free interpretation of international law, but, speaking frankly, a blunt preaching of perfidious policy.

Certainly, a strong state always can, if it wishes, find an excuse to attack a weaker country and then justify the attack, alleging that this country was a potential threat. But is this the morality of the 20th century? This is the morality of colonizers and brigands who were conducting precisely this policy some time ago. Now, in the second half of the 20th century, it is impossible to

follow the piratic morality of colonizers anymore. All of us are now witnesses to the fact of how the colonial system falls to the ground and fades away. The Soviet Union, for its part, does its best to contribute to this, and we are proud of it.

Or let us consider U.S. activities in regard to China. In reference to what legal norms can one justify these activities? It is known to all that Taiwan is an integral part of China. This has also been recognized by the U.S. Government, whose signature was put on the Cairo Declaration of 1943. However, later on the United States seized Taiwan or, actually, entered on the path of robbery. The Chinese People's Republic declared its natural aspiration to reunite the territory of Taiwan with the rest of the Chinese territory. But what was the United States reaction to this? It declared that armed force would be used to prevent the reunion of this seized Chinese territory with the rest of China. It threatens war in case China takes steps aiming at the reunification of Taiwan. And this from a country which has officially recognized Taiwan as belonging to China! Is this not perfidy in international policy?

If such methods prevailed in relations between states then there would be no room for law, and instead of it lawlessness and arbitrariness would take its place.

Thus, Mr. President, your sympathies are one thing, and actions against the security and independence of other nations, undertaken on the strength of those sympathies, is quite another matter. Naturally you can express your sympathies toward the imperialist and colonialist countries and this does not astonish anyone. You, for instance, cast your vote with them in the United Nations. This is a question of your morality. But what was done against Cuba—this is not morality. This is warlike action.

I wish to stress that if the United Nations is destined to attain true strength and fulfill the functions for which it was created—at the present time this Organization, unfortunately, represents an organism that is contaminated with the germs of colonialism and imperialism—then the United Nations must resolutely condemn the warlike actions against Cuba.

The question here is not only one of condemning the United States. It is important that the condemnation of aggression should become a precedent, a lesson which should also be learned by other countries with a view to stopping the repetition of aggression. Because if one starts to approve, or even to condone, the morality of aggressors, this can be taken as a guide by other states, and this will inevitably lead to war conflicts, any one of which may suddenly lead to World War III.

The statement which you made in your last speech to the press representatives must greatly alarm the whole world, for, in essence, you speak openly about some right of yours to use military force when you consider it necessary, and to suppress other nations each time you yourself decide that the expression of will by those nations represents "communism." What right do you have, or what right has anyone, to deprive a nation of the possibility of deciding according to its own desire to choose its own social system?

Have you ever thought that other countries could present you with similar demands, and could say that you, in the United States, have a system which gives rise to wars, pursues imperialistic policies, policies of threats and attacks on other states? There are all grounds for such accusations. And if we assume the premises which you yourself proclaim now, then, obviously, we can require the change of the system in the United States.

We, as you know, are not embarking on this road. We support peaceful coexistence among all states and noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries.

You hint at Budapest, but we can tell you straight, without hints, that it is you, the United States, which crushed the independence of Guatemala by sending your hirelings there, as you are trying to do in the case of Cuba as well. It is the United States, indeed, and not any other country which has so far been mercilessly exploiting and keeping in economic dependence the Latin American countries and many other countries of the world. Everyone is aware of that. And according to your logic, Mr. President, obviously, actions could also be organized against your country from without, which would put an end once and for all to this imperialist policy, the policy of threats, and the policy of reprisals against freedom-loving peoples.

As to your anxiety about emigrants, expelled by the Cuban people, I would say the following in this connection:

You, of course, know that in many countries there are emigrants who are not satisfied with the regime prevailing in those countries from which they fled. If such abnormal practices are introduced in the relations between states as for such emigrants to be armed and used against the countries from which they have fled, then we can surely say that this will inevitably lead to conflicts and wars. And, therefore, one should refrain from such unwise activities because this is a slippery and dangerous road which might lead to world war.

In your answer you considered it to be appropriate to touch on problems not related to the theme of my message—among them, in your interpretation, the problem of the historical inevitability of the Communist revolution.

I am only able to evaluate it as a tendency to divert from the main question—the question of the aggression against Cuba. Under suitable conditions we are also ready to exchange views on the question regarding the ways and means for the development of human society, although such a question is not being solved by disputes between groups or individual persons, regardless of the high position they may occupy in the state. The fact of whose system will turn out to be the better will be solved by the peoples.

You, Mr. President, have spoken frequently and much about your wish to see Cuba liberated. But all acts of the United States in regard to this small country contradict this. I do not even mention the last armed assault on Cuba, which was organized with the aim of changing its inner structure by force.

It was no one but the United States, indeed, which thrust on Cuba the cabalistic condition of the Havana agreement almost 60 years ago and created on its territory

its Guantanamo military base. But the United States of America is the most powerful country in the Western Hemisphere, and no one in this hemisphere is able to threaten you with military invasion. It follows, therefore, that if you continue to maintain your military base on the territory of Cuba against the clearly expressed wish of the Cuban people and government, this base serves not for defense from aggression by any foreign powers, but has the aim of suppressing the will of the Latin American peoples. It has been created for the implementation of gendarmery functions and for keeping the Latin American peoples in political and economic dependence.

The Government of the United States is now thundering against Cuba. But this only shows one thing—your lack of confidence in your own system, in the policy carried out by the United States. And this is understandable since this is a policy of exploitation, the policy of enslaving underdeveloped countries. You have no faith in your system, and this is why you are afraid that the example of Cuba might infect other countries.

But aggressive, bandit acts cannot save your system. In the historical process of developing mankind, every nation has been, and will be, deciding its own destiny on its own. As for the U.S.S.R., the peoples of our country solved this problem over 43 years ago definitely and irrevocably.

We are a socialist state and our social system is the most just of all that have existed to date because by us he who labors is also the master of all means of production. This is indeed an infectious example, and the sooner the necessity for transition to such a system is understood, the sooner all mankind will have a truly just community. At the same time, also, wars will be ended once and for all.

You did not like it, Mr. President, when I said in my previous message that there could be no firm peace in the entire world if the flame of war was raging anywhere. But this is precisely so. Peace is indivisible—whether anyone likes it or not. And I can only affirm what I said: Things cannot be done in such a way that in one region the situation is made easier and the conflagration dampened, and in another one a new conflagration is started.

The Soviet Government has always consequently defended the freedom and independence of all nations. It is obvious, then, that we cannot recognize any U.S. rights to decide the fate of other countries, including the Latin American countries. We regard any interference by one government in the affairs of another—and armed interference, especially—as a breach of all international laws, and of the principles of peaceful coexistence which the Soviet Union has been unfailingly advocating since the first days of its establishment. If it is a duty of all states and their leaders, in our times more than ever before, to refrain from acts which might threaten universal peace, it concerns even more the leaders of great powers. This is my appeal to you, Mr. President.

The Soviet Government's position in international affairs remains unchanged. We wish to build up our relations with the United States in such a manner that the Soviet Union and the United States, as the two

most powerful states in the world, would stop sabrerattling and bringing forward their military or economic advantage, because this will not result in improvement of the international situation, but in its deterioration. We sincerely wish to reach an agreement with you and other countries of the world on disarmament, as well as other problems the solution of which would facilitate peaceful coexistence, recognition of the people's right to the social and political system which they themselves

have established in their countries, and would also facilitate true respect for the people's will and noninterference in their internal affairs.

Only under such conditions is it actually possible to speak about coexistence, as coexistence is only possible if states with different social systems submit to international law, and recognize as their highest aim the insuring of peace in the entire world. Only under such circumstances will peace rest on a sound basis.

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